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THE

SUNDAY SCHOOL.

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THE SUNDAY SCHOOL.

I PROMISED, in the Cottage Cook, to give ſome account of the manner in which Mrs. Jones ſet up her ſchool. She did not much fear being able to raiſe the money, but money is of little uſe, unleſs ſome perſons of ſenſe and piety can be found to direct theſe inſtitutions. Not that I would diſcourage thoſe who ſet them up even in the moſt ordinary manner, or from mere views of worldly policy. It is ſomething gained to reſcue children from idling away their Sabbath in the fields, or the ſtreets. It is no ſmall thing to keep them from thoſe tricks to which a day of leiſure tempts the idle and the ignorant. It is ſomething for them to be taught to read; it is much to be taught to read the Bible, and much indeed to be carried regularly to church. But all this is not enough.

To bring theſe inſtitutions to anſwer their higheſt end, can only be effected by God's bleſſing on the beſt directed means, the choice of able teachers, and a diligent attention in ſome pious gentry to viſit and inſpect the ſchools.

On RECOMMENDATIONS.

Mrs. Jones had one talent that eminently qualified her to do good, namely, *judgment;* this even in the gay part of her life had kept her from many miſtakes, but though ſhe had ſometimes been deceived herſelf, ſhe was very careful not to deceive others, in recommending people to fill any office for which they are unfit, either through ſelfiſhneſs or falſe kindneſs. She uſed to ſay, "there is always ſome one appropriate quality which every perſon muſt poſſeſs, in order to fit them for any particular employment. Even in this quality," ſaid ſhe to Mr. Simpſon, the clergyman, "I do not expect perfection; but if they are deſtitute of this, whatever good qualities they may poſſeſs beſides, though they may do for ſome other employment, they will not do for this. If I want a pair of ſhoes, I go to a ſhoemaker; I do not go

go to a man of another trade, however ingenious he may be, to ask him if he cannot *contrive* to make me a pair of shoes. When I lived in London I learnt to be much on my guard as to recommendations. I found people often wanted to impose on me some one who was a burthen to themselves. Once I remember when I undertook to get a matron for an hospital, half my acquaintance had some one to offer me. Mrs. Gibson sent me an old cook whom she herself had discharged for wasting her own provisions, yet she had the conscience to recommend this woman to take care of the provisions of a large community. Mrs. Grey sent me a discarded housekeeper whose constitution had been ruined by sitting up with Mrs. Grey's gouty husband, but who she yet thought might do well enough to undergo the fatigue of taking care of an hundred poor sick people. A third friend sent me a woman who had no merit but that of being very poor, and it would be charity to provide for her: the truth is, the lady was obliged to allow her a small pension till she could get her off her own hands by turning her on those of others.

"It is very true, Madam," said Mr. Simpson, "the right way is always to prefer

ſer the good of the many to the good of one; if indeed it can be called doing good to any one to place them in a ſtation in which they muſt feel unhappy, by not knowing how to diſcharge the duties of it. I will tell you how I manage. If the perſons recommended are objects of charity, I privately ſubſcribe to their wants; I pity and help them, but I never promote them to a ſtation for which they are unfit, and thus hurt a whole community to help a diſtreſſed individual."

Thus Mrs. Jones reſolved that the firſt ſtep towards ſetting up her ſchool ſhould be to provide a ſuitable miſtreſs. The veſtry were ſo earneſt in recommending one woman, that ſhe thought it worth looking into. On enquiry, ſhe found it was a ſcheme to take a large family off the pariſh; they never conſidered that a very ignorant woman, with a family of young children, was not fit for a ſchool; all they conſidered was, that the profits of the ſchool might enable her to live without pariſh pay. Mrs. Jones refuſed another, though ſhe could read well, and was decent in her conduct, becauſe ſhe uſed to ſend her children to the ſhop on Sundays. And ſhe objected to a third, a very ſenſible woman, becauſe ſhe was ſuſpected of making

making an outward profeſſion of religion a cloak for immoral conduct. Mrs. Jones knew ſhe muſt not be too nice neither; ſhe knew ſhe muſt put up with many faults at laſt. "I know," ſaid ſhe to Mr. Simpſon, "the imperfection of every thing that is human. As the miſtreſs will have much to bear with from the children, ſo I expect to have ſomething to bear with in the miſtreſs, and ſhe and I muſt ſubmit to our reſpective trials, by thinking how much God has to bear with in us all. But there are three things which a miſtreſs muſt not be without, *good ſenſe*, *activity*, and *piety*. Without the firſt ſhe will miſlead others, without the ſecond ſhe will neglect them, and without the third, though ſhe may civilize, yet ſhe will never chriſtianize them."

Mr. Simpſon ſaid, he really knew but of one perſon in the pariſh who was fully likely to anſwer her purpoſe: "this," continued he, "is no other than my houſekeeper, Mrs. Betty Crew. It will indeed be a great loſs to me to part from her, and to her it will be a far more fatiguing life than ſhe at preſent leads. But ought I to put my own perſonal comfort, or ought Betty to put her own eaſe and quiet, in competition with the good of above an

hundred

hundred children? This will appear ſtill more important if we conſider the good done, not as *fruit* but *ſeed;* if we take into the account how many yet unborn may become chriſtians, in conſequence of our making theſe children chriſtians. For how can we calculate the number which may be hereafter trained for heaven by thoſe very children we are going to teach, when they themſelves ſhall become parents, and you and I are dead and forgotten? To be ſure, by my parting from Betty, my pea-ſoup will not be quite ſo well flavoured, nor my linen ſo neatly got up; but the day is faſt approaching when all this will ſignify but little; but it will not ſignify a little whether one hundred immortal ſouls were the better for my making this petty ſacrifice. Betty Crew is a real Chriſtian, has excellent ſenſe: and had a good education from my mother. She has alſo had a little ſort of training, for when the poor children come to the parſonage for the broth on a Saturday evening, Betty is uſed to appoint them all to come at the ſame time; and after ſhe has filled their pitchers ſhe ranges them round her in the garden, and examines them in their catechiſm. She is juſt and fair in dealing out the broth and beef, not making my favour to the parents depend on the ſkill of their children.

dren. But her own old caps, and ribbons, and caſt off clothes, are beſtowed as little rewards on the beſt ſcholars. So that taking the time ſhe ſpends in working for them, and the things ſhe gives them, there is many a lady who does not exceed Betty in acts of charity; this I mention to confirm your notion, that it is not neceſſary to be rich in order to do good; a religious upper ſervant has great opportunities of this ſort."

My readers I truſt need not be informed, that this is that very Mrs. Betty Crew who aſſiſted Mrs. Jones in teaching poor women to cut out linen, and dreſs cheap diſhes, as related in The Cottage Cook.—Mrs. Jones in the following week got together as many of the mothers as ſhe could, and ſpoke to them as follows:

Mrs. JONES's EXHORTATION.

"My good women, on Sunday next I propoſe to open a ſchool for the inſtruction of your children. Thoſe among you who know what it is to be able to read your Bible, will, I doubt not, rejoice that the ſame bleſſing is held out to your children.

dren. You who are *not* able yourſelves to read what your Saviour has done and ſuffered for you, ought to be doubly anxious that your children ſhould reap a bleſſing which you have loſt. Would not that mother be thought an unnatural monſter who ſhould ſtand by and ſnatch out of her child's mouth the bread which a kind friend had juſt put into it? But ſuch a mother would be merciful compared with her who ſhould rob her children of the opportunity of learning to read the word of God when it is held out to them. Remember that if you ſlight the preſent offer, or if after having ſent your children a few times, you ſhould afterwards keep them at home under vain pretences, you will have to anſwer for it at the day of judgment. Let not your poor children *then* have cauſe to ſay, "my fond mother was my worſt enemy. I might have been bred up in the fear of the Lord, and ſhe oppoſed it for the ſake of a little paltry pleaſure; for an idle holiday I am now brought to the gates of hell." My dear women, which of you could bear to ſee your darling child condemned to everlaſting deſtruction? which of you could bear to hear him accuſe you as the cauſe of it? Is there any mother here preſent who will venture to ſay, "I will doom the child I bore to ſin and hell, rather

rather than put them or myſelf to a little preſent pain by curtailing their evil inclinations: I will let them ſpend the Sabbath in ignorance and idleneſs inſtead of ſending them to ſchool!" Let that mother who values her child's pleaſure more than his ſoul, now walk away, and I will ſet down the names of all thoſe who wiſh to bring their young ones up in the way that leads to eternal life, inſtead of indulging them in the pleaſures of ſin which are but for a moment."

When Mrs. Jones had done ſpeaking, moſt of the women thanked her for her good advice, and hoped that God would give them grace to follow it, promiſing to ſend their children conſtantly. Others, who were not ſo well diſpoſed, were yet afraid to refuſe, after the ſin of ſo doing had been ſo plainly ſet before them. The worſt of the women had kept away from this meeting, reſolving to ſet their faces againſt the School. Moſt of them who were preſent, as ſoon as they got home ſet about providing their children with what little decent apparel they could raiſe. Many a willing mother lent her tall daughter her hat, beſt cap, and white handkerchief, and many a grateful father ſpared his linen waiſtcoat and bettermoſt hat to induce

induce his grown up ſon to attend; for it was a rule with which Mrs. Jones began, that ſhe would not receive the younger children out of any family who did not ſend their elder ones. Too many made excuſes that their ſhoes were old, or their hat worn out. But Mrs. Jones told them not to bring any excuſes to her which they could not bring to the day of judgment; and among thoſe excuſes ſhe would hardly admit any except accidents, ſickneſs, or attendance on ſick parents, or young children.

SUBSCRIPTIONS.

Mrs. Jones was very deſirous of getting the help and countenance of the farmers and trades-people, whoſe duty ſhe thought it was to ſupport a plan calculated to improve the virtue and happineſs of the pariſh. Moſt of them ſubſcribed, and promiſed to ſee that their workmen ſent their children. She met with little oppoſition till ſhe called on farmer Hoſkins. She told him, as he was the richeſt farmer in the pariſh, ſhe came to him for a handſome ſubſcription. "Subſcription!" ſaid he, "it is nothing but ſubſcriptions, I think;

think; a man had need be made of money."—"Farmer," ſaid Mrs. Jones, "God has bleſſed you with abundant proſperity, and he expects you ſhould be liberal in proportion to your great ability."—"I do not know what you mean by bleſſing," ſaid he; "I have been up early and late, lived hard while I had little, and now when I thought I had got forward in the world, what with tythes and ſubſcriptions, it all goes, I think."—"Mr. Hoſkins," ſaid Mrs. Jones, "this is but an ungrateful return for all your bleſſings."—"You are again at your bleſſings," ſaid the farmer, "but let every one work as hard as I have done, and I dare ſay he will do as well. It is to my own induſtry I owe what I have. My crops have been good, becauſe I minded my plowing and ſowing."—"O farmer!" cried Mrs. Jones, "you forget whoſe ſuns and ſhowers make your crops to grow; but I do not come here to preach but to beg."—"Well, Madam, what is it now? Flannel or French? or weavers, or a new church, or large bread, or cheap rice? or what other new whim-wham for getting the money out of one's pocket?"—"I am going to eſtabliſh a Sunday School, farmer, and I am come to you as one of the principal inhabitants, hoping your example will ſpur on the reſt to give."—"Why

then,"

then," said the farmer, "as one of the principal inhabitants I will give nothing, hoping it will spur on the rest to refuse. Of all the foolish inventions, and new-fangled devices to ruin the country, that of teaching the poor to read is the very worst."—"And I, farmer, think that to teach good principles to the lower classes is the most likely way to save the country. Now in order to this, we must teach them to read."—"Not with my consent nor my money," said the farmer, "for I know it always does more harm than good."—"So it may," said Mrs. Jones, if you only teach them to read, and then turn them adrift to find out books for themselves. There is a pronenefs in the heart to evil which it is our duty to counteract, and which I see you are promoting. Only look round your own kitchen, I am ashamed to see it hung round with loose songs and ballads. I grant, indeed, it would be better for young men and maids, and even your daughters, not to be able to read at all than to read such stuff as this. But if when they ask for bread you will give them a stone, nay worse, a serpent, yours is the blame." Then taking up a penny book which had a very loose title, she went on, "I do not wonder if you who read such books as these think it safer that

people

people ſhould not read at all." The farmer grinned, and ſaid, "It is hard if a man of my ſubſtance may not divert myſelf, when a bit of fun coſts only a penny, and a man can ſpare that penny, there is no harm done. When it is very hot or very wet, and I come in to reſt and have drank my mug of cyder, I like to take up a bit of a jeſt book, or a comical ſtory to make me laugh."—"O Mr. Hoſkins," replied Mrs. Jones, "when you come in to reſt from a burning ſun or ſhower, do you never think of him whoſe ſun it is that is ripening your corn? or whoſe ſhower is filling the ear, or cauſing the graſs to grow? I could tell you of ſome books which would ſtrengthen ſuch thoughts, whereas ſuch as you read only ſerve to put them out of your head." Mrs. Jones having taken pains to let Mr. Hoſkins know that all the genteel and wealthy people had ſubſcribed, he at laſt ſaid, "Why as to the matter of that I do not value a crown; only I think it might be better beſtowed, and I am afraid my own workmen will fly in my face if once they are made ſcholars, and that they will think themſelves too good to work." "Now you talk ſoberly, and give your reaſons," ſaid Mrs. Jones, "weak as they are, they deſerve an anſwer. Do you think

that

that either man, woman, or child, ever did his duty the worſe, only becauſe he knew it the better?"—"No, perhaps not."—"Now the whole extent of learning which we intend to give the poor, is only to enable them to read the Bible, a book in which every duty is explained, every doctrine brought into practice, and the higheſt truths made level to the meaneſt underſtanding. The knowledge of that book, and its practical influence on the heart, is the beſt ſecurity you can have, both for the induſtry and obedience of your ſervants. Now can you think any man will be the worſe ſervant for being a good Chriſtian?"—"Perhaps not."—"Are not the duties of children, of ſervants, and the poor, expreſsly ſet forth in the Bible?"—"Yes."—"Do you think any duties are likely to be ſo well performed from any human motives, ſuch as fear or prudence, as from theſe religious motives, which are backed with the ſanctions of rewards and puniſhments, of heaven or hell? Even upon your own principles of worldly policy, do you think a poor man is not leſs likely to ſteal a ſheep or a horſe, who was taught when a boy, that it was a ſin to rob a hen-rooſt or an orchard? Will your property be ſecured ſo effectually by the ſtocks on the green, as by teaching the boys

boys in the ſchool, that *for all theſe things God will bring them into judgment?* Is a poor fellow who can read his Bible ſo likely to ſleep or to drink away his few hours of leiſure as one who *cannot* read? He may, and he often does make a bad uſe of his reading, but I doubt he would have been as bad without it. And the hours ſpent in learning to read will always have been among the moſt harmleſs ones of his life."

"Well, Madam," ſaid the farmer, "if you do not think that religion will ſpoil my young ſervants, I do not care if you do put me down for half a guinea. What has farmer Dobſon given?"—"Half a guinea," ſaid Mrs. Jones. "Well," cried the farmer, "it ſhall never be ſaid I do not give more than he, who is only a renter. Dobſon give half a guinea! Why, he wears his coat as threadbare as a labourer."—"Perhaps," replied Mrs. Jones, "this is one reaſon why he gives ſo much." "Well, put me down a guinea," cried the farmer; "As ſcarce as guineas are juſt now, I'll never be put upon the ſame footing with Dobſon neither." "Yes, and you muſt exert yourſelf beſides in inſiſting that your workmen ſend their children, and often look into the ſchool yourſelf to

ſee

ſee if they are there, and reward or diſcourage them accordingly," added Mrs. Jones as ſhe took her leave. The farmer inſiſted in waiting on her to the door. When they got into the yard, they ſpied Mr. Simpſon, who was ſtanding near a little group of females, conſiſting of the farmer's two young daughters, and a couple of roſy dairy-maids, an old blind fiddler, and a woman who led him. The woman had laid a baſket on the ground, out of which ſhe was dealing ſome ſongs to the girls who were kneeling round it, and eagerly picking out ſuch whoſe titles ſuited their taſtes. On ſeeing the clergyman come up, the fiddler's companion (for I am ſorry to ſay ſhe was not his wife) puſhed ſome of the ſongs to the bottom of the baſket, turned round to the company, and in a whining tone, aſked, "if they would pleaſe to buy a godly book." Mr. Simpſon ſaw through the hypocriſy at once, and inſtead of making any anſwer, took out of one of the girls' hands, a ſong which the woman had not been able to ſnatch away. He was ſhocked and grieved to ſee that theſe young girls were about to read, to ſing, and to learn by heart ſuch ribaldry, as he was aſhamed even to caſt his eyes on. He turned about to the girl, and gravely but mildly ſaid,

"young

" young woman, what do you think ſhould be done to a perſon who ſhould be found carrying a box of poiſon round the country, and leaving a little at every houſe?" The girls all agreed that ſuch a perſon ought to be hanged; " that he ſhould," ſaid the farmer, " if I was upon the jury." The fiddler and his woman were of the ſame opinion, declaring *they* would not do ſuch a wicked thing for the world, for if they were poor they were honeſt. Mr. Simpſon turning to the other girl, ſaid, " which is of the moſt value, the ſoul or the body?"—" The ſoul, Sir," ſaid the girl. " Why ſo?" ſaid he. " Becauſe, Sir, I have heard you ſay in the pulpit the ſoul is to laſt for ever." " Then," cried Mr. Simpſon in a ſtern voice, turning to the fiddler's woman, " are not you aſhamed to ſell poiſon for that part which is to laſt for ever? poiſon for the ſoul?"—" Poiſon!" ſaid the terrified girl, throwing down the book, and ſhuddering as people do who are afraid they have touched ſomething infectious. " Poiſon!" echoed the farmer's daughters, recollecting with horror the ratſbane which Lion, the old houſe-dog, had got at the day before, and after eating which ſhe had ſeen him drop down dead in convulſions. " Yes," ſaid Mr. Simpſon to the woman, " I do again repeat, the

ſoul

ſouls of theſe innocent girls will be poiſoned, and may be eternally ruined by this vile traſh which you carry about."

"I now ſee," ſaid Mrs. Jones, to the farmer, "the reaſon why you think learning to read does more harm than good. It is indeed far better that they ſhould never know how to tell a letter, unleſs you keep ſuch traſh as this out of their way, and provide them with what is good, or at leaſt what is harmleſs. Still this is not the fault of reading, but the abuſe of it. Wine is ſtill a good cordial, though it is too often abuſed to the purpoſe of drunkenneſs."

The farmer ſaid that neither of his maids could read their horn book, though he owned he often heard them ſinging that ſong which the parſon had thought ſo bad, but for his part it made him as merry as a nightingale.

"Yes," ſaid Mrs. Jones, "as a proof that it is not merely being able to read which does the miſchief, I have often heard, as I have been croſſing a hay-field, young girls ſinging ſuch indecent ribaldry as has driven me out of the field, though I well knew they could not read a line of what they

they were ſinging, but had caught it from others. So you ſee you may as well ſay the memory is a wicked talent, becauſe ſome people miſapply it, as to ſay that reading is dangerous, becauſe ſome folks abuſe it."

While they were talking, the fiddler and his woman were trying to ſteal away, but Mr. Simpſon ſtopped them and ſaid, "woman, I ſhall have ſome farther talk with you; I am a magiſtrate as well as a miniſter, and if I know it, I will no more allow a wicked book to be ſold in my pariſh, than a doſe of poiſon." The girls threw away all their ſongs, thanked Mr. Simpſon, begged Mrs. Jones would take them into her ſchool after they had done milking in the evenings, that they might learn to read only what was proper. They promiſed they would never more deal with any but ſober honeſt hawkers, ſuch as ſell good little books, Chriſtmas carols, and harmleſs ſongs, and deſired the fiddler's woman never to call there again.

This little incident afterwards confirmed Mrs. Jones in a plan ſhe had before ſome thoughts of putting in practice. This was, after her ſchool had been eſtabliſhed a few months, to invite all the well-diſpoſed grown

grown up youth of the parish to meet her at the school an hour or two on a Sunday evening after the necessary business of the dairy, and of serving the cattle was over. Both Mrs. Jones and her agent had the talent of making this time pass so agreeably by their manner of explaining Scripture, and of impressing the heart by serious and affectionate discourse, that in a short time the evening school was nearly filled with a second company after the younger ones were dismissed. In time, not only the servants, but the sons and daughters of the most substantial people in the parish attended. At length many of the parents, pleased with the improvement so visible in the young people, got a habit of dropping in, that they might learn how to instruct their own families. And it was observed that as the school filled, not only the fives-court and public-houses were thinned, but even Sunday gossiping and tea visiting declined. Even Farmer Hoskins, who was at first angry with his maids for leaving off of those *merry* songs (as he called them) was so pleased with the manner in which the psalms were sung at the school, that he promised Mrs. Jones to make her a present of half a sheep towards her first May-day feast. Of this feast some account shall be given hereafter, and the reader may have some further account of the Sunday School, in the History of Hester Wilmot. Z.

END OF THE FIRST PART.

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